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TWO OLD MILLS.

A Sketch of Pine Run and Spring Valley Mills and Some of Their Early Owners.

During the second quarter of the eighteenth century there was considerable activity in the building of grist and saw mills on the upper branches of the Neshaminy and on the smaller tributaries of the Delaware, through the middle section of Bucks county. At about that period this section became pretty well taken up by actual settlers, and with the clearing of the forests and the production of grain came the increased demand for home mills. Prior to 1720 there was probably no mill in operation further north than Canby's, near Newhope, and Richard Mitchell's at Rush Valley. About 1722 the Dyerstown mill was erected by John Dyer, and in the next decade several other mills were erected in the neighborhood, among them Butler's mill, at Chalfont, and the Carversville mill, erected by John Hough and Ambrose Barcroft in 1730. Between that date and 1750 probably a dozen mills were erected in the section referred to, among them being the Spring Valley mill built by Richard Church and Jonas Preston in 1742, the Turk mill by Hugh Miller, a few years later, and the Pine Run mill by Thomas Holcomb in 1744.

The Pine Run Mill, known for two generations as "Swartzlander's Mill," and still referred to locally by that name, was erected upon a strip of land originally supposed to have been included in the great tract of the Free Society of Traders in New Britain township. When this tract was resurveyed and sold in 1724, it was discovered that an "L" shaped tract lying along two lines of Buckingham township, comprising 1100 acres, was not included in the metes and bounds of the original survey, and it was sold by the Trustees as unlocated land in two tracts to Jeremiah Langhorne and Thomas Fitzwater.

Thomas Fitzwater transferred his warrant of survey to his brother George Fitzwater, in 1729, and on May 28, 1733, the strip of land 120 perches wide, lying along the west line of Buckingham, was surveyed to George Fitzwater. It extended from Fountainville on the north 420 perches. He later purchased of Langhorne the remainder of the strip of the same width extending down to the angle in the old line of Buckingham at Wallace Dungan's factory. Out of the first mentioned tract George Fitzwater, on June 10, 1744, conveyed to Thomas Holcomb, of New Britain township, millwright, a tract of 120 acres and 152 perches, including the present site of the Pine Run Mills, now owned by Arthur Chapman. Thomas Holcomb was a son of Jacob and Mary Holcomb, prominent Friends of Buckingham, where he was born about 1712. He married, September 24, 1741, Hannah Pennell, daughter of William and Anna Mercer Pennell, and settled on the above tract of which he obtained a conveyance three years later, and at once began the erection of a mill. Having located his site near the western line of his tract he purchased two years later, May 20, 1746, of Clement Doyle, uncle of the pioneer Innkeeper to whom Doylestown owes its name, an additional tract of 43½ acres adjoining on the West, so as to obtain tail-race privileges.

The milling venture does not appear to have been a successful one as in the Winter of 1749, Joshua Morris, obtained judgment against Holcombe and the property was levied upon by the sheriff. Contrary to the usual practice, on the return of the sheriff to the Court of Common Pleas, a committee was appointed to audit the accounts of the creditors of Holcomb, not only the one mentioned in the writ, but all the creditors of the said defendant. This may have been owing to the death of the defendant in the interim, as he died at about this time leaving an only son Jacob. The committee, which consisted of Amos Strickland, Samuel Carey and William Croasdale, sold the mill and two tracts of land on September 3, 1750, at pubilc sale to Joshua Morris, of Abington, the plaintiff in the writ, for £393 pounds. Though Morris continued to hold the title as of record until 1756, subsequent records show that Owen Roberts was the nominal owner and operator of the mill during at least a portion of this period.

During the incumbency of Roberts a suit was instituted against him by Mathew Day, who had inherited from his father, Christopher Day, a portion of the tract lying on the opposite side of the Swamp Road in Plumstead, for damages for the overflowing of his meadow by the erection of a mill dam on the Roberts property. This suit was settled amicably on December 20, 1754, when Day executed a release to Owen Roberts, former owner, and Smith Cornell, the present owner, acknowleding receipt of £18, for which sum he released and forever discharged the said Cornell and Roberts "of and from all actions, suits, costs and damages by reason of the said mill dam or its overflowing his land or meadow ground."

On November 13, 1756, Joshua Morris conveyed the whole of the two tracts, comprising over 160 acres to Smith Cornell. On May 29, 1767, Cornell conveyed the same to Jacob Stout, of Rockhill, potter, whose son-in-law, Abraham Freed, became the tenant and operator of the mill, and continued as such until his death which occurred December 21, 1772.

Jacob Stout was the lineal ancestor in the fifth generation of Mahlon H. Stout, Esq., of Doylestown. He became a large land owner in Bucks and Northampton counties. His son,

Abraham Stout, the great-grandfather of our townsman, was one of the best educated men in his community. He was a surveyor and scrivener and a great many of the old wills now on file in the office of the Register of Wills are in his handwriting. They are models in penmanship and neatness. He inherited the homestead property in Rockhill, near Perkasie, in the division of his father's real estate in 1783, and died there in 1815.

On April 17, 1770, Jacob Stout conveyed the 41-acre tract adjoining the mill to his son-in-law, Abraham Freed, and the following year Freed purchased of Mathew Day 112 acres on the opposite side of the Swamp Road in Plumstead, and twelve acres nearer the mill in New Britain. On May 4, 1772, he purchased of Richard Doyle, son of Clement, before mentioned, 35 acres adjoining his first purchase.

As before stated Abraham Freed died December 21, 1772. He was buried in the old Day buring ground, on the corner of the Plumstead farm which he owned at the time of his death. This old burying ground was dedicated to the use of the public by the will of Christopher Day who died March 6, 1748-9. The tombstone of Abraham Freed is one of the the best preserved in the lot, the inscription which is still perfectly legible is as follows:—

HEIR RUHET IN GOTT
ABRAHAM FREED

Ist Gestobern den 21
December 1772, Seines
Alter 32 Jahrs

Wiewohl ist Meinem Leib
Nach Angestandenem Leiden
Wiewohl ist Meiner Seel
In Jenen Himmels Freuden

Mr. Freed was survived by his widow Salome, and two infant children, one five, and the other three years of age. Letters of administration were granted to the widow and her brother, Abraham Stout, of Rockhill. On December 13, 1773, when the administrators petitioned the Court for auditors to settle their accounts the widow signed as "Salome Freed," but between that date and March, 1774, she married Gabriel Swartzlander, who participated in the settlement of her accounts as administrator.

Gabriel Swartzlander, who was the great-grandfather of Dr. Frank Swartzlander, of Doylestown, was a native of Steinhardt in Schwartzwald, Germany, and came to this country with his father Philip Swartzlander in 1752 when five years of age. On petition of the administrators, December 13, 1774, the land of Abraham Freed, lying in New Britain, 76 acres and 123 perches, was sold and purchased by Jacob Stout. Jacob Stout died about 1780, leaving to survive him four children. Abraham, of Rockhill, before referred to, Isaac, of Williams township, Northampton county, Catharine, the wife of Jacob Schlieffer, of New Britain, and Salome Swartzlander. In the partition of the real estate between the children, in 1783, the mill and adjoining tracts in New Britain, comprising about 200 acres were alloted to his daughter Salome Swartzlander. By conveyance to and from Christian Lacey in 1792 the title to this land was vested in Gabriel Swartzlander, who continued to own it and reside thereon until his death on July 17, 1814.

Gabriel and Salome Swartzlander were parents of nine children, eight of whom, John, Magdaline Kratz, Jacob, Catharine, Margaret, wife of John Stem; Joseph and David, lived to maturity and all except Magdaline survived him. In 1810, Gabriel Swartzlander entered into an agreement with his eldest son John for sale of 76 acres, the present Carwithen farm, but no conveyance was made therefor until after the death of both Gabriel and John when the administrators of the former conveyed it to Deborah and Anna, the daughters of John. The remainder of the tracts about 140 acres was adjudged to Joseph Swartzlander, the third son in 1815 under proceedings in partition. Jacob, the grandfather of Dr. Frank Swartzlander, had removed to Southampton township and purchased a mill there in 1808. On February 26, 1820, Joseph Swartzlander conveyed to his youngest brother, David, 97½ acres of the Homestead tract, lying along the Swamp road, retaining the mill and 41½ acres until his death in 1875, when it was sold by his only son Abel, still residing in Doylestown township, as administrator to Joseph Lapp. Lapp sold off all but 19½ acres adjoining the mill, which he conveyed to Oliver S. Jacoby, November 1, 1879. Jacoby operated the mill until his death in 1888 when it was sold to Aaron B. Detweiler. Detweiler sold the property to Harry R. Cronthamel in the Spring of 1897 and on September 4th of that year the mill buildings were entirely destroyed by fire. The title was transferred to Arthur Chapman on April 1, 1898, and he has since erected thereon a fine brick mill, which is now being successfully operated by Henry S. Beidler, of Doylestown. The present building is the fourth erected on the same site in 150 years.

SPRING VALLEY MILL.

The old mill at Mechanics' Valley, now owned and operated by A. K. Steever, was erceted by Richard Church and Jonas Preston soon after 1741, on a part of a tract of 267 acres patented to Richard Church in that year by the Proprietors. The south corner of this tract was on the south side of the present Doylestown and Buckingham turnpike, nearly opposite the store property of B. S. Doan. The tract extended from that point straight across to the Street Road and in a northwesterly direction between parallel lines from these two points to the present line of the Mechanicsville road above Church's school house. The old road from Well's Ferry (Newhope) to Swedesford, near Norristown, intersected it diagonally. The mill site being located a few hundred yards south of the line of this road at what is now Riniker's Corner, from which point a private road, now public, extended down along the race to the mill. There was at the time no public road south of the mill nearer than the York

Road, but soon after the building of the mill a road was opened from the mill to the York Road, near its intersection with the Swamp Road.

Richard Church was a native of Ireland, and brought a certificate from there to Friends in Pennsylvania, dated 3 mo. 4th, 1729, which he presented to Buckingham Monthly Meeting of Friends on the tenth of the Tenth month in the same year. In 1735 he married Sarah Fell, daughter of Joseph Fell, the pioneer of that family, who had recently purchased and settled upon a tract of land adjoining the Church tract.

There is nothing to indicate that Richard Church was a miller by trade, and his want of knowledge of the craft probably accounts for his association with Jonas Preston in the building of the mill.

Preston was one of the pioneer millers of central Bucks county, and some ten years prior to the building of the Church mill had purchased the Heaton mill, now Woodman's, near Langhorne, and was operating that mill at the time the Buckingham mill was built. He married Jane Paxson at Buckingham, 4th-mo. 6th, 1732, but was at least twice married later. He removed to Chester, Chester county, prior to 1760.

On April 2, 1748, Richard Church and wife conveyed to Jonas Preston, a one-half interest in 20 acres of land on which "A water power grist and corn mill had lately been erected." On December 25, 1752, Isaac Fell, to whom the title of a portion of the Joseph Fell tract had descended, conveyed to Church and Preston a water-right over his land lying west of the mill. The 20-acre mill tract embraced the lower end of the 267 acre tract and with a further purchase of ten acres in 1800, by Abraham Overholt, the then owner of the mill tract included practically the entire village of Mechanic's Valley, long known as Spring Valley.

Jonas Preston on June 19, 1753, conveyed his interest in the mill to William Preston, Mason, (probably his brother) who also purchased of Richard Church fifty acres north of the mill, along the Street Road. On February 2, 1754, William Preston and Richard Church conveyed their respective interests in the mill to John Hough, Richard Church including in his conveyance, the entire right to the use of the water passing through his whole plantation. Richard Church having re-purchased the fifty acres sold to William Preston continued to own the most of the 267 arces until his death in 1776, when it passed to his children, Moses, and Joseph Church, Sarah, wife of John Branin, of Evesham, New Jersey, Elizabeth Church, Rachel, wife of John Large, Mellicent, wife of Joseph Large and Abi wife of Jonathan Carlisle. In 1779 the widow and heirs of Richard Church conveyed to Jacob Landis the 50-acre Preston tract, and four years later Moses and Joseph Church purchased the balance of their father's land. Moses died in 1821 unmarried and Joseph in 1828, leaving several children. Richard Church is buried upon his old farm near Church's school house, where a rude wall encloses his last resting place. The only descendants of Richard Church who bear his name are the children and grandchildren of the late Eleazer F. Church of Newtown who was a grandson of Joseph Church. There are however a number of his lineal descendants still residing in Bucks county the offspring of his daughters and the daughters of Joseph Church.

John Hough who purchased the mill in 1754 was probably the son of John Hough the pioneer miller of Carversville, but since John Hough of the Warwick family was also a miller it is impossible to determined which one of them was the owner of the Buckingham mill. He conveyed a one-half interest in the mill in 1757 to John Barnhill the great-great-grandfather of President Roosevelt, and the following year joined with Barnhill in the conveyance of the whole interest to James Carmalt and James Wilson. In 1762 Carmalt and Wilson conveyed it to Robert and Ellis Lewis of Philadelphia. On February 4 ,1764, the Lewises conveyed it to John McKinley. It is certain that during at least a portion of the period between 1757 and 1764 the mill was not operated by the owners of the fee. In 1764 when the present road from Dyerstown to Mechanics Valley was opened it was to extend "from Dyer's mill to a mill known as Eastey's mill." The "Eastey" referred to was Moses Este who in 1756 removed from Enfield, Conn., to this section of Bucks county where he continued to reside until 1763 or 1764 when he removed to Readington, Hunterdon county, New Jersey. That he resided in this neighborhood is shown by his signing, with several other residents of Buckingham a petition for license at Gardenville during the period mentioned and being the only one of the name ever known to reside in this section there can be little doubt of his identity.

John McKinley continued to operate the mill until Nov. 23, 1772, when he conveyed it to John Clemens. John Clemens died seized of the mill property and by will proved February 21, 1782, directed it to be sold, and the proceeds to be divided between his son Jacob and the children of his decesased daughters, Margaret Buckwalter and Ann Springer. His executors conveyed the mill the following year to Abraham Landis who married Ann the daughter of Margaret Buckwalter. Up to this time the mill property had enjoyed a monopoly of the water passing through the other land formerly owned by Richard Church. Jacob Landis, as before stated, had purchased of the heirs of Richard Church the fifty acres lying along the Street Road through which the mill stream flowed. He was a joiner and desiring to utilize the water power on his property he purchased of his brother for fifty pounds the right to use the water-power for a saw mill or other purpose "other than a grist mill," and erected a saw mill at the present site of the mill now owned by Reuben High. To this was added an oil mill soon after and in 1849, when both mill properties were sold by the assignees of Samuel Yard

ley the neglect to reserve the right in deed to Samuel Richardson, was taken advantage of by the purchaser and a grist mill was established, though the deeds for the lower mill continue to contain the grant of the old time privileges over this land, as did also the deed from the assignees, though of later date than the deed to Richardson.

Abraham Landes only retained the title one year, but during that time acquired from Uriah Hughes, who owned the land whereon the blacksmith and wheelwright shops now stand, a tail race privilege extending down to the present line of the turnpike. He conveyed the mill property to John Fritzinger, a former resident of New Britain, in 1784. Fritzinger operated the mill for six years conveying it to Christian Wierman in 1790, who the following year transferred the title to Abraham Overholt of Franconia township, Montgomery county.

As before stated Abraham Overholt in 1800 added to the mill property ten acres out of the Archibald tract. This tract at its North corner extended across the Doylestown road near the Clift house and included a small triangular piece of the Callender property on the opposite side of the road. Overholt passed the title to Michael Moyer in the Spring of 1801 and he, three years later transferred it to Morris Heston, who died the same year, and the following Spring his administrators conveyed the property to Israel Penrose.

Prior to this date an oil mill had been added to the plant and Penrose also established a distillery on the property. The distillery was not part of the mill site proper, but was probably located where Mrs. Lydia Frankenfield now resides on the Doylestown pike. Penrose purchased ten acres more of the Archibald tract and about twenty acres of the Church tract, all that part lying north of the mill and south of the old Newhope road, making his total holdings sixty-three acres. Under his administration the little village began to improve, but becoming involved in debt the property was sold by the Sheriff April 30, 1829, to Jonathan Hough. During the tenure of Hough the opening of the Doylestown road gave a new impetus to the village, and various new industries were established. The old distillery became a joiner shop, and a "Temperance Honse" was erected at the corner now occupied by the store. In 1838 Jonathan Hough sold the mill and water rights and six acres and sixty-three perches of land to Samuel Yardley, Jr., of Doylestown, who also purchased the oil and saw mill erected by Jacob Landis in 1784. Hough retained the "Mansion House" and stable formerly connected with the mill. The former was the long stone house now occupied by John Neff and the stable occupied the site of the late Amy Callender's stable. Either at this time, or previously, a two-story frame house was erected on a triangular piece of land, (now included in the Callender property), opposite the mill, which was included in the conveyance to Yardley by Hough. Jonathan Hough died December 22, 1838, leaving to survive him a widow, Susanna, and seven children, Mary, the wife of Joseph Beans, and mother of the late Joshua Beans, Esq., of Doylestown, Eliza, who remained single, Oliver Joseph, David, Henry and Thomas. The property was divided by proceedings in partition into five tracts. Eliza Hough accepted a tract of four acres lying south of the Doylestown road, part of the ten acres purchased by Overholt in 1800, upon which was the joiner shop and some sheds. The Temperance House and 128 perches, the greater part of the present Callender property, was sold to Joseph Beans and he a few years later conveyed it to Thomas Hall who opened a store thereon. The balance of the land was purchased by Hugh Meredith. All the children of Jonathan Hough are now deceased. Oliver died in Plumstead township, and his widow and son, Henry H. Hough, removed to the village of Buckingham where they resided until within a few years. Two of the sons of Oliver are now residing in Florida. Henry Hough died in Doylestown several years ago and a daughter still resides there. Joseph Hough was somewhat of a genius, but dissipated and exceedingly eccentric, he invented and patented several useful inventions. He devoted many years to the perfection of a propeller for steamboats and prepared a model which was operated on the old mill dam.

Samuel Yardley, continued to reside in Doylestown where he conducted a store, but operated the mills under his own supervision. The upper mill was conducted for a number of years by the father of ex-Recorder Isaac O'Connell. Yardley made an assignment for the benefit of his creditors in 1847 and the mills were sold the following year. The Spring Valley mill was purchased by Jacob Willig, of New Jersey, who retained the title until April 1, 1854. During the tenure of Willig the dwelling house in which he resided, standing on the opposite side of the road from the mill, was burned down and a young German girl, a domestic in the family, was so badly burned that she died the next day. The house was never rebuilt and its site was soon after absorbed into the Callender property and Samuel Frankenfield, who purchased the property of Willig, erected the present dwelling across the road.

The mill was sold by the Sheriff in 1856 and purchased by Moses P. Hall who was at that time conducting the store on the corner. He conveyed it the following year to Edward W. Hall who conducted it until 1866, when it was purchased by the late Andrew J, Larue who transferred the title the following year to John S. Matthews.

It was again sold by the Sheriff in 1874 to Ralph Shelly, whose assignees conveyed it in 1893 to A. K. Steever, the present owner.

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